US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY

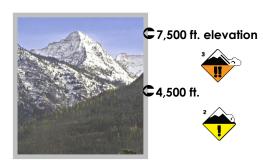
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: Valid Until: Next Update: Issued by: 8:00 AM, Friday, March 09, 2012 Midnight, Friday, March 09, 2012 Tuesday, March 13, 2012 Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



Avalanche Danger Summary

- 3 -Considerable : 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation,
 During periods of thaw and rising
 freezing levels especially on
 southerly aspects on and below
 steep, open slopes and gullies. Do
 not ignore the potential for cornice
 failures and consequently
 triggering leeward slopes as
 freezing levels climb to 7000 ft
- 2 Moderate : 4,500 to 7500 ft elevation, on shaded steep open slopes and gullies not beneath cornice overhangs as freezing levels climb to 7000 ft

Avalanche Danger Trend

Likelihood of Avalanches

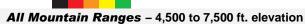
The avalanche danger should remain at current levels through Saturday night. Be aware that during this time of rising freezing levels rain could occur and result in slide activity at elevations below 6,000 ft. Sunday should start a cooler wet pattern with new snow predicted accompanied by moderate SW winds, with a potential of wind loading easterly aspects..

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION All Mountain Ranges – 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation Danger Level Confidence Good • During periods of thaw and rising freezing levels dangerous avalanche conditions exist • Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential

• Natural avalanche possible

	Human triggered avalanches <i>likely</i>
Avalanche Size & Distribution	Small avalanches in many areas
	Larger avalanches in specific areas
	Very large avalanches in isolated areas

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION



Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	 On shaded aspects, heightened avalanche conditions exist on steep, open slopes and gullies, avoid steep slopes underneath cornice overhangs Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	Natural avalanche unlikelyHuman triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	Small avalanches in specific areasLarger avalanches in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain	Weather
<u>Summary</u>	 Light to trace amounts of new snow across the region on Tuesday and Wednesday. High pressure started to become entrenched into region with warming temperatures, with overnight lows at or above freezing.
Precipitation	Light to trace amounts
Temperature	 Below freezing until Thursday morning Since midday on Thursday temperatures have warmed into the upper 30's even into the 40's in some locations with overnight lows at or above the freezing mark.
Wind	Winds have been light out of the SW

Field Observation Locations	
Thursday, 3-08-12	 Dry Creek Basin in the West Cabinet Range 21 air miles S of Troy Peter's Ridge in the Northern Swan Range
Observer Report Locations	
Thursday, 3-08-12	 Received info message of a triggered avalanche on Divide Mountain in the Mission Range with very little additional information

<u>Avalanches</u>	 No natural avalanches observed during field obs with very good visibility
Observed	

Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★
New Storm or Near Surface Snow		 Thin melt freeze crusts at the surface overlying some 10 to 20 cms of soft snow. Down from this soft layer, with setlement the snow pack is grading in hardness with 1 finger to pencil layers within the top third or 70 to 80 cms of the snow pack.
Wind Loading		 Faint pluming was occasionally observed but overall winds were very light 2 to 4 mph out of the SW
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	**	 Buried surface hoar and thin interfaces of faceted grains still linger within the mid pack. This persistent weak layer is bridged over with varying degrees of significant melt freeze crusts from above. This weak layer can still be artificially triggered by a skier or snow mobile. Do not ignore this persistent weak layer. Be especially concerned when approaching convex rolls or unsupported terrain features. Triggering this layer could result in fractures of up to 4 foot in depth and obviously would be catastrophic for anyone caught. Basal layers of lingering/decomposing facets are another persistent weak layer in some portions of our region. This layer can be triggered especially over thin zones at or near upper elevation ridge tops. These slides would go deep and could have fractures that reach the ground and would be equally catastrophic
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze		Freezing levels will climb on Friday. The peak of this current warming trend during this high pressure event is expected to occur on Saturday.
Rain-on-Snow		Rain on snow could occur at elevations below 6000 ft. Watchout for rain to go beyond forecast predictions.
Loose Snow		
Other Concerns		

Weather Forecas	Current NWS Backcountry Forecast	
<u>Summary</u>	• A ridge of high pressure will continue over the region through Friday causing warm and dry conditions. The pattern will become southwesterly on Saturday but still with warm temperatures. A cold front is anticipated to swing through the region on Sunday and linger into Monday which will cause the snow levels to drop. The higher terrain should receive significant snowfall from this front especially the mountains along the Montana/Idaho border and northern part of the Continental Divide. Cool and showery conditions are anticipated for the remainder of next week.	
Precipitation	Light accumulations through Saturday night	
Temperature	Temperatures above freezing through Saturday	
Wind	Winds expected to be moderate out of the SW through Sunday.	

Avalanche Outlo	pok
Trend	The avalanche hazard will remain at the current level through .Saturday night
Concern	 With the freezing levels climbing point releases and roller ball activity from rock outcrops or thin zones could pull out into mid pack weak interfaces on southerly aspects. Do not attempt to travel on steep open terrain or run outs during this thaw period. Do not linger beneath cornice overhangs especially during this warming period. Persistent weak layers within the mid pack and at the ground, do still exist and require investigation with a snow pit prior to traveling over or on this terrain
Comment	 ALWAYS carry and know how to use your avalanche safety equipment Transceiver Probe Shovel (A lack of this equipment played in the recent fatal incidents) Watch for any rapid changes in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on any slope that has the potential to avalanche